



# BUSINESS

ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT

## Noor Specializes in Hosting the Main Events

By **CHRISTINA HAMLETT**  
The Outlook

Just as the unique elements of a painting are enhanced by the selection of a complimentary frame, so, too, does a special event need just the right setting and ambience to make it memorable to all who attend. The concepts of presentation and perfection are as much in evidence from the first step through the elegant doors of Noor as they are in conversation with Robert Shahnazarian Jr., owner of Pasadena's newest premier destination for weddings, parties, conferences, fundraisers, music festivals or intimate dining for two.

Noor officially opened last November with a major donor event for its first client, KPCC. While Shahnazarian reveals with pride that everything turned out wonderfully, he's also not shy about admitting that he awakened several mornings during the planning process with a few more gray hairs than he'd had when he started.

"What I've come to know," he said, "is that when you're planning events, there are so many things you can control — the food, the décor, the service — but the one thing that will always be the unknown is the unique vibe that the participants ultimately bring with them. If they come with the idea of having a great time, they probably will no matter what else happens. On the other hand, if they're in a grumpy mindset, can't find a parking place or get rained on, even the smallest glitch is going to loom large."

Shahnazarian is not a stranger to fickle moods or large-scale

extravaganzas. "I spent 15 years with Sony Music producing sessions for John Legend, Taylor Swift, The Killers and lots of others," he said. "One of the most valuable lessons the music industry taught me was about really listening to the marketplace, because you can only push a product so much.

"One of my first jobs at Sony, for instance, was setting up a meeting for all the heads of Sony from around the world for Michael Jackson's album that was going to be a mix of greatest hits and new material. I walked into the conference room and I saw the covers of Newsweek, Time, Rolling Stone and what the picture was going to look like and what the headline was going to say. They were also going to have statues going down the Thames River and the Seine, etc. and they'd planned everything right down to the letter to re-create the huge phenomenon of what 'Thriller' had been.

"When the product came out, however, it just didn't resonate. It wasn't that the marketing wasn't in place or that the album wasn't produced well; it simply didn't strike the right chord with the audience that everyone was intending. What I learned from that experience is that you have to always keep your finger on the pulse and go out and see what the trends are in order to stay relevant."

Shahnazarian's decision to



**Robert Shahnazarian Jr.**

leave Sony was a combination of listening to a dream business that his wife had embraced and recognizing that the traditional model of selling music was rapidly becoming obsolete. "Labels can spend half a million dollars or more making and marketing an album and people can now listen to it and download for free," he

said.

"I went to get my [master of business administration degree] at Pepperdine and rethink what I was going to do with my life. At the same time, my wife and her brother finally took her dream of opening up a space that retains the traditions of different cultures but delivers the elements of hotel core service, elegance and location."

Shahnazarian continued: "A lot of the ethnic banquet halls are usually not in the best locations, have tacky decor and the service — though not always — can be mediocre. The wealthier, new generation of clients doesn't want to go to those halls, but when they go to the larger hotels they tend to lose the culture and the customs.

"I went to a Taiwanese wedding at a big hotel in town, for example, and everything was great, but there was absolutely no culture about it. What we realized was that there was a mid-tier level that just wasn't being addressed. People who have special events to celebrate don't want to spend as much as they would at a hotel, but they still want a beautiful décor and outstanding service. I think our debut of Noor really meets the current demands of the economy and the marketplace."

Shahnazarian said that the name Noor in Armenian means pomegranate. "A pomegranate symbolizes fertility and abundance," he said. "It also means 'illumination' or 'the light' in Farsi and Arabic. When we came up with our logo, the roundness is the pomegranate and the lighter part is the illumination." Smiling, he pointed out that the two ballrooms — the Sofia and the Ella — were named after his young nieces.

"What we love about our location on the upper level of Paseo Colorado is that it gave us a rich opportunity to have indoor ballrooms and yet this wonderful balcony that looks out on Colorado Boulevard and that breathtaking view of the mountains," Shahnazarian said. "It also works out well because we can use the space during the week for corporate events and then use the weekends for all the social gatherings."

With 5,000 square feet of adjacent storage room, Shahnazarian has no shortage of tables, chairs and banquet items to accommodate events for up to 2,000 guests.

Having a boutique restaurant bar where people could have small-



plate appetizers, good mixology drinks and fine wines was another concept that Shahnazarian felt was compatible with Noor's quietly upscale vision. "When we first started envisioning what kind of wines we wanted to serve in the bar, I really wanted to have Mediterranean wines and for us to be known for that," he said. "The market, however, really demanded that we have California wines, because that's what people like to drink. At the end of the day, it's all about researching, understanding and truly appreciating what's going to resonate with your clientele."

Shahnazarian never strays too far from his music roots. "We took over the promenade downstairs last year and sponsored a world music festival that was free to the public," he said. "We had a full band, a folk section and a constant stream of singers. My only rule was that they couldn't have any electronic instruments, only authentic stuff.

"We invited different ethnic vendors to come and sell jewelry, artwork and photography and just really celebrate cultural diversity, and not bring in any elements like religion or politics. It reminded me of an opportunity I had to go to a Middle Eastern music and dance camp in Mendocino in the redwood forest. What was so incredible was that for one week you had Israelis, Palestinians, Turks, Armenians, Persians and all these different groups that came together for a single purpose — to share the experience of food, music and culture."

Shahnazarian also believes in fixing things personally if there's ever any indication that something is wrong. "When we first opened, we had a Halloween party," he said. "It went great and was packed. The next day, though, I heard that there was a tenant at Paseo Colorado's Terraces who had been disturbed by the noise level. My music producer ears immediately perked up and I asked if I could visit her to try to resolve the problem for future events. I picked a night we were having

another event and actually went to her apartment so that I could hear what she was hearing. I sent a text to my DJ and told him not to turn down the volume but to cut out the sub-woofer until the noise was no longer audible in her apartment. It's just the little things you do that don't take that much time but make a huge difference in being a good neighbor in the community where you're doing business."

Opening any type of venture in these uncertain economic times is obviously a risk, a reality that Shahnazarian took into full account. "We consider ourselves more in the events business than the restaurant business," he said. "Because our location at Paseo Colorado is a quiet spot in the mall, it's a great destination spot but not a prime restaurant setting unless you're a brand name like El Chollo or P.F. Chang's. And in spite of a troubled economy, people are always going to get married, they're always going to have baptisms, they're always going to have bar mitzvahs. In other words, there are always going to be events that people will spend money on because it's a special occasion and they want it to be memorable."

He said that Noor offers packages that are completely customized. "I had a client, for instance, who told me that they really wanted a certain room but that money was tight and what could we work out?" he said. "Some of the options we offered were that instead of a plated, sit-down dinner, they could have a buffet or a cocktail reception where waiters circulated with platters of appetizers. There's also the fact that Saturday nights are the most expensive to orchestrate but that you can carry off the same elegant event by simply moving it to a different evening or doing a luncheon or brunch. Because of the flexibility we offer, we can try to come up with something that will fit their needs and their budget."

In the short time that it has been open, Noor has held events involving magazines, radio stations, weddings, a memorial and a private school luncheon. "All I can really add is that we're here to serve the community and that as long as we can meet or exceed our clients' needs, they're going to have a great event," Shahnazarian said.

Noor is located at 260 E. Colorado Blvd. Phone: (626) 793-4518. Web: www.noorevents.com.

### Holmes Body Shop Hosts Open House

Tom and Tracy Holmes will host a grand opening and open house at Holmes Powersports & Tracy Holmes Gallery, located at 1200 E. Colorado Blvd. in Pasadena, from 3-8 p.m. this Friday, Jan 21.

Come celebrate the opening of San Gabriel Valley's only motorcycle accident repair shop and motorsports art gallery. Join Tom and Tracy, and AMA Motorcycle Hall-of-Famer David Bailey at the open house, and there will be demonstrations, food, beer and wine, and raffle prizes.

Attendees who donate \$10 to the Injured Riders Fund will get a free Tracy Holmes fine art print of David Bailey, Lance Armstrong, and AMGEN tour of California or motorsports.

Here are the scheduled events:

• 3 p.m. — Demonstration of motorcycle repair; Mega-m.a.x.

demo of frame measuring and Motojig demo of frame straightening.

• 4 p.m. — Meet David Bailey broadcaster, motocross school instructor, former professional motocross racer, Motocross Des Nations champion, 2000 Ironman World Champion and AMA Motorcycle Hall-of-Fame inductee.

• 5 p.m. — Taco Bar opens; beer and wine is served and music begins. Tracy Holmes Gallery is open for viewing.

• 6 p.m. — Listen in and be inspired as Tom White interviews Bailey about his life, racing career, injury and racing after his injury.

To RSVP, call (626) 844-3110 ex 113. For additional information contact, Alex Gonzalez at (909) 261-4290 or send an e-mail to [agonzalez@holmesbodyshop.com](mailto:agonzalez@holmesbodyshop.com).